

EDITORIALS

He stepped up, so give him a hand

In our opinion

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Occupying a post that lost much of its clout over the years, Lt. Gov. Jim Folsom Jr. was not expected to wield a great deal of authority on the floor of the Alabama Senate. Work behind the scenes, maybe. But up there with the gavel? Probably not.

So it came as more than a surprise Tuesday when the lieutenant governor simply ignored the minority members who have been tying up Senate action for most of this session and allowed the majority members to vote on the routine bills. Bills, by the way, that had to be considered before the upper house could start work on the budgets.

It was not the way we would have wanted the stalemate ended. But considering the alternative — protracted special sessions, the decisions of school superintendents in limbo, agencies unable to plan for next year, teachers pink-slipped, skilled employees looking for other jobs — it might prove to be the best of a bunch of bad solutions.

From the start this whole affair has been an embarrassment. While some have argued that the minority members were right to fight for the principle of minority representation, it was never clear just what they represented.

From the start personal animosity against members of the majority inspired many of them, and though there were principled senators on both sides spite and spleen also were involved. It was not pretty to watch.

It is not over, of course.

In the four meeting days that remain in the session the budgets must get through committee and onto the floor for a vote. And then the governor must sign them — not certain for sure.

Which brings us to the irony of it all.

The minority members all but killed the session because they wanted input into the budgets that would be considered. What they have accomplished is that in order for the budgets to be passed as required by our Constitution, things will have to move swiftly and input will have to be limited.

So the rules over which the minority members stalled the Senate will be critical to getting the budgets passed.

Now, however, the minority's input will not be the only one limited. Time will limit input from everyone.

Sow the wind ...